

# CHINA'S NEW RULERS

By FRANK G. CARPENTER.

GOSSIP ABOUT FAMOUS CELESTIALS WHO ARE COVERING THE EMPIRE.

How the New Empress Dowager Looks—Her Possible Ability—Stories of the Prince Regent—He Goes About Incognito and Will Establish a Newspaper—Prince Chun's Devil Cart—Yuan Shih Kai's Sore Leg—His Enormous Influence—Did He Kill Kwang Su—Chang Chi Tung and His Monkey Soul—A Word About Tang Shao Yi and Natung.

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This great empire of China is still very unsettled. On the surface everything is peaceful enough, but the deaths of the great Dowager Tsai Au and the emperor Kwang Su have brought new forces to the front, and the warring factions are scheming, plotting and fighting for the control of the government and the fat things of the new civilization.

And, indeed, the game is worth the



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andleet China, in its natural resources the richest land upon earth, is to be developed. Its mines are to be opened, its railroads built and modern machinery added to the muscle of its four hundred million hard-working humanity. It is to have new systems of taxation, and the possible squeezes, will be enormous. Fortunes incalculable hang on the trees of the possible future, and lasting fame awaits those who can lead these almond-eyed children of Israel out of the wilderness of



PRINCE SU,  
President of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

the past into the milk-and-honey lands of the twentieth century.

The New Empress Dowager.

At present the imperial family stands at the top, but even that is divided into factions. The relatives of Pu Yi, the three-year-old baby whom the great dowager chose as the emperor, have their hands on the machine, and the regent is Prince Chun, this baby's father. At the same time, one must remember that when Prince Chun's father, Kwang Su, the last emperor, began his reign he was likewise a

baby, and that with a father fully as strong as the present imperial regent. Nevertheless, the elder Chun had no power through his son, and the government was managed by the great dowager, who held the reins to the day of her death. We have now another empress dowager in Tsai Au's place, and it remains to be seen whether she and her party will not overshadow Prince Chun.

It is said that the new empress dowager has no independence of action. She is represented as a gentle creature with the backbone of a jelly-fish. Within the past few months she has given the lie to such statements. She has refused to approve of many of the extravagant expenditures inaugurated by her predecessor, and has directed that the bills of the imperial household be cut down. The old dowager had planned improvements at the summer palace which were to cost millions. These have been countermanded, the electric lights have been taken out of certain of the buildings, and an order for a new steam launch on the palace lake has been canceled.

It will be remembered that Tsai Au when she first came into the palace, was noted for her modesty and backwardness; and that it was not until her imperial husband died that the officials had any idea that she possessed remarkable ability. Yehonala, the wife of Kwang Su, the present empress dowager, is the niece of the great dowager and as such she was forced upon Kwang Su. That young emperor did not want her, but the great dowager insisted, and in order to smooth matters gave Kwang Su as his first concubine the girl he had picked out for his wife. Indeed, it is said that Kwang Su never loved Yehonala, and that he sometimes threw his shoe at her in anger. She may have been a spy of the old empress and as such have kept her posted on the faith or unfaith of her imperial husband.

Yehonala is by no means a beauty. She is lean, wrinkled and yellow. She has bad teeth, stooping shoulders and a sorrowful face. She has, however, the absolute control of the young emperor, to whom she stands in the light of a mother, with all the authority that comes from that position in China. As such she has taken the real place of the Princess Caun, the wife of the regent, who is the baby emperor's real mother. The latter does not live in the palace; she has nothing to do with Pu Yi, and has even to beg for an audience with her own baby son.

The Prince Regent.

As to the prince regent, he is about ten years younger than the empress dowager, and his position and powers are not settled. He is practically the emperor; but if Yehonala has any of the attributes of the great dowager, he cannot be sure that she will not step in and overturn all his plans, just when everything is moving the smoothest.

Prince Chun is the fiscal grandson of the Emperor Tao-Kwang, who ruled China from 1821 to 1851, and the great-grandson of the Emperor Chia-Ching, who was on the throne from 1796 to 1820. His father was the sixth son of Tao-Kwang, and as such was the brother of the Emperor Hsien-Feng, who was the husband of old Tsai Au. Princess Chun, the elder, had four sons. The second was the late emperor, and the third the present prince regent.

I understand that Tsai Au wavered between making the prince himself or the imperial baby the heir to the throne and that she had long conferences with Yuan Shih Kai and Chang Chi Tung on this subject. It is probable that Yuan Shih Kai preferred the baby, and it may be that this was one of the reasons of that statesman's dismissal from office.

There is no doubt but that Prince Chun is more fitted to rule China than any other member of the imperial family. He is better educated than the other Tartar princes; he has traveled more and knows more about modern methods and modern civilization. He kept his eyes open when he was sent to Germany to apologize to the kaiser for the murder of Baron von Ketteler. As he traveled he had a map before him and studied the politics of the countries he passed through. He saw the wonders of our civilization, and since he has been on the throne he has been studying the western sciences, modern military tactics and other things. One of the generals of the Chinese army who was formerly minister to London is giving him lessons in English, and he listens to lectures upon various subjects for about two hours each day. He has ordered that the chief tutor for his baby son shall be posted in western learning as well as in the Chinese classics.

A Modest Ruler.

The prince regent manifests a general disposition to improve himself in every way possible. Just the other day he asked one of the officials of the Hsin College whether he might read the books stored in the imperial library, and he is doing all he can to



Chang-Chi-Tung, China's Great Scholar-Statesman.

keep track of the Chinese newspapers and public opinion as expressed therein. I am told that he has personally instructed the grand councillors that he wants his own faults and shortcomings pointed out, and that the censors must not be afraid to criticize him. He has also put up outside his residence a petition box which is accessible to all classes of people.

He proposes to establish a newspaper here as the Chinese organ of the central government, and also to give medals to the editors of the other Chinese papers who prove to be beneficial



Yuan Shih Kai, Who Lost His Job.

to the country and to society. He has changed the old custom by which the Manchu officials called themselves slaves in addressing the throne. They will in the future use the expression "your minister." He is also playing the part of Haroun al Raschid in going about Peking incognito gathering information first hand on what the people think of his administration. He has ordered the censors to keep watch of and report all wrongs; and on the whole, is proving himself to be a live-up-to-date figure in the government.

Prince Chun's Devil Cart.

The prince regent now goes about in a fine closed carriage or brougham, with his outriders in livery going along in front and behind. He has given up the Chinese cart since his trip abroad, and like most of the high officials he now has as good an outfit as you will see in London or Paris. About the time that the prince went to Berlin there was only one brougham in Peking, and the official who owned it was looked upon as a reactionary by his fellows. They called his carriage a "devil cart," and sneered at him for aping the ways of foreigners. Of late the "devil cart" has become common; and now there are scores of landaus, dog carts and other stylish equipages owned by high class Chinese. Peking is steadily improving its roadways, and the steam roller is making its way into the other cities of the empire. The fact that the prince uses a brougham is causing others to purchase them.

The Passing of Yuan Shih Kai.

The ablest official in China has now

gone into retirement. I refer to Yuan Shih Kai, the old protege of Li Hung Chang, the strong friend of the foreigners during the Boxer rebellion and the man who has done more to further western civilization than any Chinese now living. Yuan Shih Kai saved the life of the great dowager, and during her latter days he was her premier and confidential adviser. The old lady appreciated the fact that he took his life in his hands when he refused to behests of the late emperor, when the latter had demanded that Yuan advance his modern army to the capital and put her in prison. He was at the top of his power when she and the emperor passed away, and every one thought him to be the man for the hour. The foreigners were so convinced of this that they objected to his dismissal. Nevertheless, Yuan was put out of office within a few weeks after the death of Kwang Su, and it is claimed that this was because of an edict which the latter wrote when in his death throes. Another theory is that Yuan Shih Kai actually took the life of the late emperor when the empress dowager was dying, for fear that he would lose his head if Kwang Su remained on the throne. As to the truth of this no one knows except the highest officials and Prince Chun. It is safe to say that a man like Yuan Shih Kai, when his own death was in question, would hardly hesitate to remove even an emperor to save his head.

The Kind of a Man Yuan Is.

I heard a story last night which illustrates the character of Yuan and confirms this opinion. It relates to a rebellion which broke out while he was viceroy of Chili, and when the foreigners were still holding Tientsin. The situation was delicate and Yuan wanted to show that he could control his own people. His capital was at Pao Ting Fu, and the village, which had rebelled, was off at the other side of his province. He ordered his soldiers to march to that quarter and



Natung, the Manchu Head of the Foreign Office.

round up the mob, and if they did not submit to wipe them from the face of the earth. The villagers refused to put down their arms, and the soldiers, as per directions, slaughtered them with their Gatling guns, killing one thousand in less than an hour. The day after this an American friend of mine, who was then associated with Yuan Shih Kai, said to him that he thought his actions were rather precipitous. Yuan replied:

"Yes, it may seem so, and I suppose your people at Tientsin will criticize me. But if they do so, you may tell them that is the way I do business; and that they need have no fear of any rebellions going unpunished."

The report of this went forth as Yuan had intended, and it effectually stopped the uprisings among the Chinese.

Prince Chun Afraid of Him.

I imagine that Prince Chun and his party got rid of Yuan because they feared his power through his many appointees of subordinate officials all over the empire. He was especially strong in the army, and the officers worshipped him. He is naturally a military leader, and is at his best when at the head of his troops. He would rather talk to a military man any time than to a civilian, and it is largely due to him that the army is being reorganized and made over on modern lines. I am told that his position has been such during the past half dozen years that he could, if he would, have made himself emperor, and that he did not was only because he was a patriot and had the good of his country at heart.

The Manchus do not like Yuan Shih Kai. He has been largely instrumental in cutting down the big squeezes they have had ever since the present dynasty came into being.

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